

Ulna (Distal) Fracture

Forearm fractures tend to occur more in men than what they do in women. This is due largely in part to men participating in more contact sports, falling from elevated heights, altercations and car accidents. These ulna fractures can also occur from any direct trauma along the subcutaneous border, which is often described as a nightstick fracture because the victim will often attempt to protect their head from the assault.

The fracture can occur anywhere along the ulna, but most commonly they occur near the wrist (distal part of the forearm). If the ulna fractures where it makes up the elbow joint, it would normally be referred to as a fractured elbow.

Ulna (Distal) Fracture Anatomy

The ulnar bone is one of two forearm bones, being the ulnar and the radius. It is the larger of the two bones, and lies on the little finger side of your wrist. It forms the main bony protuberance of the elbow. Distal refers to the place where the fractures tend to be. This is located close to the wrist. Proximal fractures are further up towards the elbow.

How to Treat an Ulna (Distal) Fracture:

1. Splint

For those fractures that have less than 50 percent displacement in the shaft, a splint is often applied initially for seven to ten days in an attempt to start the healing process. The main goal is to try and keep the arm in place, while allowing the swelling to decrease.

2. Functional Bracing

After wearing the splint, a functional brace is applied for about eight weeks. During that time, you will need to engage in a series of exercises to promote movement in the wrist, hand and elbow. Depending on how severe the fracture is, immobilization with a sling and compression wrap might be all that is needed at this point.

3. Surgery

If the fracture is displaced, it will need to be treated with internal fixation and open reduction using a 3.5 millimeter compression plate. After surgery, you will need to use an elbow splint for five to seven days before going through physical therapy to improve movement in the joint.

Tips:

- When participating in sporting activities, make sure to wear the proper equipment at all times.
- When falling, avoid placing your arm out in front of you in an attempt to catch yourself.
- Following the routine provided by the medical professional will ensure a smooth and speedy recovery. Always follow rehabilitation guidelines.
- Stiffness is common after a cast and can cause problems for several months following the fracture. So get to your therapist for treatment to prevent elbow and wrist restriction.

